



Post-Event Report

Loud and Clear – Why Hearing Care is Key to Tackling Demographic Change in Europe

08 April 2025

Executive summary

- **Event overview:** EHIMA and MEP Dr. András Kulja hosted a high-level event at the European Parliament to highlight the role of hearing care in addressing Europe's unprecedented demographic change.
- **Evidence and impact:** More than 10% of the European population currently experiences hearing loss, and demographic change inevitably means that hearing loss prevalence will rise sharply. As data shows that over 30% of hearing loss in Europe goes undiagnosed, the cost of increasing hearing loss for European society could be enormous, encompassing both direct healthcare expenses and substantial indirect costs from lost productivity.
- **Technological innovation:** Hearing care can be a cost-effective strategy to reduce healthcare burdens. EHIMA showcased advanced hearing care solutions with AI, health tracking, and seamless connectivity.
- **Personal testimony:** Véronique Rohaert shared how early access to hearing care improved her personal and professional life, underscoring the value of timely support and inclusive care.
- **Panel discussion:** Experts called for integrated care models, regulatory clarity (especially on MDR and the AI Act), and implementation of the European Accessibility Act. Emphasis was on innovation, access, and inclusion across the EU.
- **Call to action:** Key asks included prioritising hearing screening, which is non-invasive, cost effective and widely accessible; and supporting innovation and medical advancement through a coherent, forward looking regulatory framework.

Event overview

On 8 April 2025, the European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association (EHIMA), in collaboration with Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Dr. András Kulja, hosted the event ***“Loud and Clear: Why Hearing Care is Key to Tackling Demographic Change in Europe”*** at the European Parliament in Brussels.

As Europe faces the long-term implications of demographic change – including a declining working-age population and increasing pressure on healthcare systems – the event examined how hearing care can contribute to healthy ageing, greater independence, and sustained economic participation.

EHIMA convened the event to highlight the often-underestimated impact of hearing loss on public health, social inclusion, and workforce engagement.

The event provided an opportunity to share evidence, explore innovative solutions, and discuss ways to integrate hearing health more effectively into national and European frameworks.

Hearing loss, while common, remains insufficiently addressed in policy discussions despite its tangible consequences for autonomy, well-being, and productivity. Tackling it is not only a public health priority but also relevant to Europe’s long-term social and economic resilience.

Key insights

The event brought together policymakers, industry leaders, healthcare professionals, and individuals with lived experience to explore the critical role of hearing care in addressing Europe's demographic challenges. Discussions centred on the impact of hearing loss on public health, social inclusion, and economic productivity, highlighting the need for integrated policy approaches and innovative solutions.

Opening remarks by MEP Dr. András Kulja



MEP Dr. András Kulja, a medical doctor, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety (ENVI), and member of the Committee on Public Health (SANT), opened the event by emphasizing the importance of hearing health in the context of Europe's ageing population. *"Hearing loss is not simply about communication. It can lead to social withdrawal, depression, cognitive decline, and increased vulnerability in clinical settings. Caring for patients with hearing loss—especially older adults—requires additional time, adaptation, and sensitivity. For families, it brings emotional and financial burdens. And for society, it adds significant long-term costs and productivity losses. This is why our response must not stop at managing decline. We must restore autonomy and participation—empowering elderly people to lead meaningful, connected lives."*

Insights from the EHIMA leadership

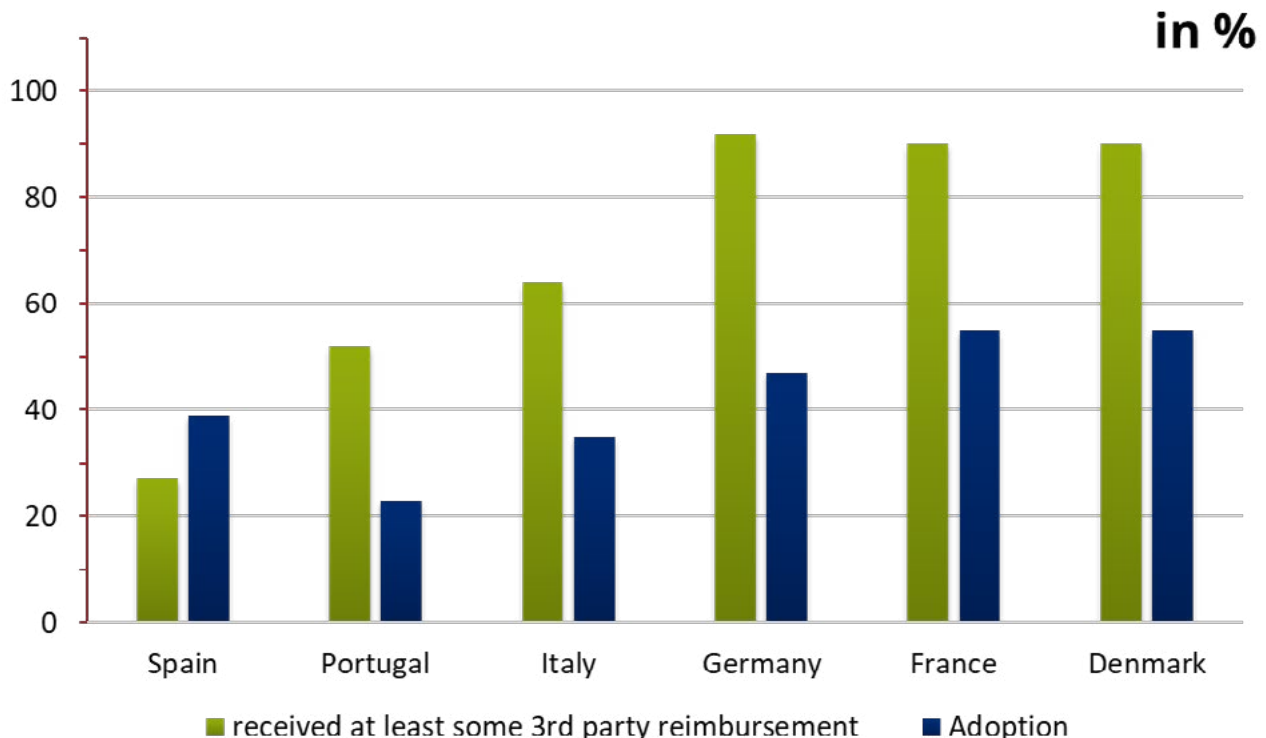


Dr. Stefan Zimmer, Secretary General of EHIMA, presented findings from the association's EuroTrak survey series. Dr. Zimmer began by outlining the prevalence of self-reported hearing loss in the EU, which ranges from 9.7% in France to 12.5% in Italy. Hearing aid adoption varies considerably — from just 23% in Portugal to 55% in Denmark and France. Uptake is strongly associated with the availability of third-party reimbursement and professional hearing care providers.

Dr Zimmer highlighted a number of barriers along the care pathway. Up to 30% of individuals with self-reported hearing loss do not seek a medical diagnosis, and almost half do not go on to use hearing aids, even when recommended by an ENT-doctor. These gaps, he noted, have broader implications beyond individual health.

In particular, he pointed to the impact on workforce participation: Among people of working age, only 64% of those with hearing loss are in employment, compared to 77% of the general population. This disparity is estimated to result in €55 billion in lost productivity across the EU each year.

At the same time, survey data show that hearing care is associated with positive outcomes across a range of indicators—including job retention, quality of life, and emotional wellbeing. Notably, 62% of hearing aid users reported that they regretted not having been fitted earlier, reinforcing the case for early intervention and improved public awareness.



Brussels, April 8, 2025 – Dr. Zimmer, EHIMA



Arnd Kaldowski, President of EHIMA and CEO of Sonova AG, highlighted the critical link between hearing loss and issues such as social isolation, cognitive decline, and dementia. Emphasizing that untreated hearing loss is a significant risk factor for dementia, he highlighted advancements in hearing instruments, which now feature Bluetooth connectivity, Auracast Broadcast Audio, and AI-enhanced sound processing. These devices also include integrated health tools like fall detection and fitness tracking, along with smartphone apps, rechargeable batteries, discreet designs, and durable, waterproof construction to support active lifestyle.

Addressing Europe's demographic changes, he noted that the EU's working-age population is projected to decrease by 57 million by 2100, while the WHO predicts that by 2050, 2.45 billion people globally will be affected by hearing loss. Mr. Kaldowski called for a coordinated European strategy on hearing screening among the EU and its Member States, advocating for regulatory frameworks that facilitate medical advancements without imposing overlapping requirements.

Personal perspective from Véronique Rohaert

Véronique Rohaert, a hearing aid user and coordinator at a Belgian hearing care centre (Audika), shared her personal journey of living with hearing loss since childhood. Drawing from her professional experience, she highlighted the importance of early intervention, awareness, and a supportive care environment. Her testimony underscored the real-life value of access to care in terms of dignity, participation, and emotional well-being.



Panel discussion: Strategies for inclusive hearing care



The panel discussion, moderated by **Giorgio Rizzello**, Chair of EHIMA's Public Affairs Committee and Head of Government Affairs Europe at Sonova AG, brought together representatives from EU institutions, industry, and the hearing care profession to explore how policy, innovation, and regulation can support better access to hearing care across Europe. Mr. Rizzello began by reflecting on his early career as a lawyer in Brussels, noting the progress made in EU disability and health policy, and framing the discussion around how hearing care fits within broader public health and inclusion strategies.



Inmaculada Placencia Porrero, Senior Expert in Disability and Inclusion at the European Commission, highlighted the importance of regulatory tools in creating more accessible environments. She focused on the [European Accessibility Act \(EAA\)](#), which will begin applying across Member States in June 2025. The EAA will introduce harmonised accessibility requirements for products and services such as electronic communications, banking, self-service terminals, and e-commerce platforms. Ms. Porrero noted that the EAA aims to reduce fragmentation in the internal market while ensuring that accessibility becomes a standard part of design and delivery. She also emphasised the need to complement regulation with investment in training, support services, and public awareness.



Other panellists brought a range of professional perspectives. **Peter Aksel Villadsen** (Senior Vice President, GN Hearing) discussed the integration of hearing care into national healthcare and labour frameworks.

Dr. Maren Stropahl, Director for Holistic Hearing Care at Sonova AG, emphasized the importance of person-centered, holistic hearing care approaches that not only address physical hearing needs but also consider cognitive and emotional factors. Such care enhances cognitive function, social connectedness, and emotional well-being.

Oliver Bisazza (CEO, MedTech Europe) addressed the importance of regulatory clarity, especially in light of recent developments such as the Medical Device Regulation and the EU AI Act. He noted that well-designed rules are essential to protect patients and enable innovation. He cautioned against regulatory overlap, causing barriers for smaller innovators.

Overall, the discussion pointed to shared priorities: **improving accessibility, supporting sustainable innovation, and embedding hearing care within the broader context of Europe's response to demographic change.**

Call to action

As Europe responds to the challenges of demographic change, hearing loss should be recognised as both a public health concern and a strategic consideration within broader efforts to support economic resilience, inclusion, and healthy ageing.

The following calls to action reflect **key recommendations raised during the event** and align with wider EU objectives in health, innovation, and accessibility:

- **Integrate hearing care into national strategies on ageing, healthcare, and inclusion.** While health systems are the responsibility of Member States, EU-level coordination can support policy alignment, benchmarking, and longer-term planning. There is currently no consistent approach to adult hearing checks across Member States. Introducing more structured screening programmes — especially targeting individuals over 50 — would help promote early intervention and mitigate long-term impacts. EU-level initiatives could provide a framework for cooperation and best practice sharing.
- **Improve accessibility of public infrastructure and services.** With the European Accessibility Act due to apply from June 2025, there is an opportunity to prioritise inclusive design in public spaces and services. This includes incorporating assistive listening technology such as [Auracast Broadcast Audio](#) in transport, retail, cultural venues, and digital interfaces.
- **Support innovation through a clear and proportionate regulatory environment.** Hearing care has proven to be a cost-effective strategy to reduce healthcare burdens. While safety and accountability remain central, emerging regulations such as the Medical Device Regulation and the AI Act, should be implemented in a way that avoids unnecessary complexity or duplication. Regulatory clarity is key to fostering continued investment in high-quality, effective hearing technologies, across the EU.

- **Strengthen data and research capacity.** Improved data collection on hearing loss prevalence, treatment outcomes, and societal impact would support more targeted and effective policymaking. EU-level research and innovation programmes can help build the evidence base needed to guide long-term action.

Together, these steps can support a more inclusive and sustainable approach to hearing care — one that is aligned with Europe's broader ambitions for healthy ageing, technological leadership, and social cohesion.



Acknowledgements

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Thank you



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